Chair, Madam Executive Director

I am speaking on behalf of the European Union as a donor.

We welcome the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 and the extensive consultation process that has proceeded it. We appreciate that it builds on experience acquired by UNICEF and its partners, especially during the response to COVID-19, and draws on the lessons identified in the mid-term review and the evaluation of the current Strategic Plan, the Humanitarian Review and different evaluations.

Given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, we welcome UNICEF’s efforts to work on systemic changes in order to address the underlying causes of child mortality, poverty, vulnerability, sexual exploitation, gender inequality and exclusion in all settings. It will be important to properly monitor changes at systemic outcome level, foresee timely corrective measures if necessary and keep the Board informed about progress and challenges.

Given UNICEF’s dual mandate and the increasing volume of its humanitarian operations, we welcome that humanitarian action is integrated throughout the Strategic Plan and that a humanitarian lens has been systematically applied to the theory of change and results framework. With a view to building resilient systems and accelerating
progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, we support the nine change strategies identified in the Strategic Plan, notably risk-informed Humanitarian-Development Nexus programming across all contexts. We welcome the five goal areas, which address the key areas to ensure that no child is left behind, and commend the role UNICEF plays and continues to play in advancing children’s rights, even more so in the midst of the COVID-19 crises. With respect to goal area 1, we would appreciate more focus on nutrition, including more ambition in developing and rolling out innovative nutrition approaches. We would also appreciate clarification on how the reference to sustainable food production policies relates to UNICEF’s mandate.

We welcome UNICEF’s objective to continue contributing substantially towards social cohesion and peace within societies. The intended cross-cutting programming on resilience, peacebuilding and sustaining peace, and climate action will help build stronger local capacities to prevent, prepare for and respond to crises, thus ensuring a stronger focus on the root causes of fragility, conflicts, displacement and emergencies. We would be interested to hear which measures UNICEF plans to put in place to effectively support Nexus approaches and programming. In the context of building and sustaining peace, we encourage UNICEF to systematically apply a conflict-sensitive approach and ensure that its humanitarian action is carried out fully in line with the humanitarian principles and perceived as such by all actors.

As regards goal area 3, we welcome UNICEF plans to support evidence-based policies, programmes and products to support inclusive education for children with special needs, including children with migrant and refugee background, as those children are too often not ensured early
access to education. We strongly support UNICEF intentions to prevent child migration related detention and family separation and find it important that access to basic services is ensured, regardless of the migration status of a child. We encourage UNICEF to ensure that migrant children are engaged and empowered to reach their potential including through transition into adulthood.

Given the magnitude and complexity of needs in an environment of funding constraints, we very much welcome the interest to engage in transformative partnerships, within and beyond the UN system. We encourage UNICEF to continue with its commitment to building further synergies with other actors in order to maximize collective impact. We also strongly encourage UNICEF to continue its efforts for efficiency gains, through more common services and joint-up approaches with other UN agencies in a “one UN” approach, or through aid modalities that allow for lower management costs. We are pleased to see that QCPR mandates have been integrated into the new Strategic Plan and welcome UNICEF’s renewed commitment to the United Nations development system reform. We also strongly support UNICEF’s intention to make its programming more responsive to local needs, to improve its accountability to affected populations and to develop its cooperation with local partners.

Overall, we appreciate the factoring in of environmental considerations throughout the Strategic Plan. We also support UNICEF’s intention to become a more agile, effective and efficient organization that can respond effectively to change and uncertainty and focus on outcomes.

Thank you.